



church and peace

Church and Peace Newsletter Autumn 2013

Dear Friends,

Dorothee Soelle prayed: "Of course praying helps, and knowing that we are one with the Power that pushes the grass up through the concrete." I inevitably thought of this prayer whenever I heard news from Syria during the past few days and weeks. It may seem at first that nothing helpful is happening. And we don't know whether our protests against military intervention have actually achieved anything. Was the USA intending anyway that its threat of intervention should influence Russia and Iran? Or was it our protests which brought about a rethink?

I think back to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when nearly 9 million people around the world demonstrated against military intervention – to no avail. But was that really the case? Don't we find ourselves in an entirely different situation ten years and several wars and interventions later? The journalist Otmar Steinbicker is even talking about a paradigm shift. A UN resolution providing for chemical weapons to be dismantled in an orderly manner during a raging civil war encourages him to speak in this way.

In this newsletter you will find first and foremost reports on the meetings and conferences of the Church and Peace network. The themes could hardly be more to the point : The responsibility to protect is a challenge to us especially in the face of the civil war in Syria. What can we say in answer to Christians in Palestine? What is our response to growing arms exports? Where does our responsibility here in Europe lead us to? The newsletter reflects our searching to answer with our lives so that we stay truthful in our relationships with God and our sisters and brothers. It reflects the support we are giving and receiving.

The vision of Isaiah is guiding us:

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4)

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Meeting May 2014
Contact data

Davorka Lovreković



Discussing the lectures in small group discussions

"Seek the Welfare of the City"

International Conference of Church and Peace, 31.5. – 2.6.2013 in Selbitz

"Many things are not good in this city. Millions of people are on the run from environmental degradation and poverty, arms exports, and armed conflict. Structural violence is enshrined in public policy and civic engagement often seems undesirable."

With these words Davorka Lovreković, the new General Secretary, introduced the theme of the International Conference of

Church and Peace. What remains for Christians? Is there a different way for congregations, communities, and churches than to adapt unresistingly to society's political principles and to retreat into spiritual crannies? How can Christians today follow their calling to be salt and light in a world full of injustice and violence? Where are they called to resist and to throw a spanner into the efficient machinery of institutional violence?

Conference participants from eleven countries grappled with these issues in the spacious premises of the Kommunität Christusbruderschaft Selbitz, a corporate member of the European Network of Church and Peace.

In his keynote speech, **Ullrich Hahn**, a lawyer specializing in immigration and asylum law and President of the German branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, formulated concisely the prophetic mission of the church as he sees them in biblical sources. His theses on the relationship of Christians to state authority sparked lively discussions in the subsequent discussion groups.

Lloyd Pietersen, British New Testament scholar and member of the steering committee of the Anabaptist Network in Great Britain and Ireland, asked the question, "What would Paul say to the Occupy movement?" In a dynamic presentation, he brought alive to his listeners the historical context in which Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans and then presented an interpretation of Romans 13:1–7, a passage of central importance to the relationship of Christians with the State.

"An increasing number of New Testament scholars are recognising that the language of the New Testament regularly subverts imperial claims.

(...) Just as the earliest Christian martyrs refused to worship Caesar, knowing that such refusal was an act of treason, so we refuse to worship Mars, the god of war, Mammon, the god of wealth and Technē, the goddess of technology. Or, in twenty-first century terms, we will not worship at the shrine of the military-industrial complex that drives so much of the world's economies." (...)

Lloyd Pietersen

The full article can be found on our homepage: www.church-and-peace.org

In his response, **Alen Kristić**, a Catholic scholar of religious studies from Bosnia, who is currently engaged in research and teaching at the University of Graz, took a critical look at the relationship between the respective dominant religious communities and political trends in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Under these conditions, prophetic power emerges only through individuals and through religious minorities who have organized themselves into interdenominational groups.

Janna Postma, a Mennonite counsellor and pastor in a district on the outskirts of The Hague that is heavily shaped by the immigrant community, discussed the dislocation experienced by many people in our day and so gave context to the words of Jeremiah 29:1–14 forming the title of the Conference.

Discussions in the working groups that followed represented the entire spectrum of diverse Christian engagement in society: internal church discussion around the concept of "just peace" and its implementation in a community such as the Christusbruderschaft; specific conflicts, such as in Syria and Mali; art; speaking prophetically while still remaining in dialogue; and concrete examples of Christian commitment, such as working with refugees in Germany, with socially excluded groups in Serbia, or with oppressed aboriginal people in Canada.

The intense content-based sessions were interspersed with opportunities for prayer and worship as well as a lively evening of music and entertainment where many facets of the biblical "Shalom" came to expression as participants revealed artistic talents in often joyful, but sometimes also thought-provoking contributions. In his sermon, Martin Wirth, spiritual director of the Christusbruderschaft, developed this theme of Shalom as "the dawn colour of an anticipated new day" that suffuses every social commitment arising from Christian motivation.



Alen Kristić: Church and society structures are interdependent. Life-promoting engagement of the churches is urgently needed.

Robert Seither, translated by Kim Comer

"A turning point for religious communities towards political socialization into democratic political culture as a form of peacemaking would not represent a mere accommodation to what is socially desirable but in truth a religious catharsis. I suggest to reflect on the prevailing models of political socialisation in our local religious communities. I would like to make clear that content and values of the conscience of the believers who belong to the local religious communities are interdependent with the content and values that shape their conscience as citizens. Awareness of the responsibility of every local religious community, each individual and society for the construction of peace depends on the prevailing values and content that both the believers and society is transporting."

Alen Kristić

The full article can be found on our homepage: www.church-and-peace.org

Annual General Meeting 2013

How does working for peace look like nowadays?

Report by Bernard Dangeard, Communauté de l'Arche

The Annual General Meeting is held annually, whereas the international conference takes place only every other year. This year's Annual General Meeting began on a Thursday evening, 30 May 2013, with a round of introductions: every participant was able to report briefly on their own work during the past year or the work of their group. Only the "Southeast Europe" region had sent a written report of their activities in advance of the Annual General Meeting; they work under much more difficult circumstances than the rest of us, supporting "the poor" (old people, children, Roma...), organising training in nonviolence or in how communities can live together after they have been at loggerheads for centuries and fought each other in the recent past. (The written report is available on request from the office.)

The regular business of an Annual General Meeting includes something which we have been doing for several years now in the Communauté de l'Arche: agreeing the budget. Funds are very low. During the past year time was spent on finding a new General Secretary to follow Marie-Noëlle von der Recke. The post was advertised and a search committee established which conducted interviews and made recommendations to the Administrative Committee.

The verbal reports of both Martin Schuler and Davorka Lovreković made it clear how important face-to-face meetings are along with e-mails and other written communications. One of the tasks of the international staff is to visit groups and individuals. It is

these personal contacts and the exchange of information via the international office and between members which keeps Church and Peace alive.



Marie-Noëlle von der Recke listening to the speeches offering thanks for her fruitful work

Henk Blom, representing Dutch Mennonites, asked what working for peace should entail nowadays. He provoked a lively discussion. This question, and also the question as to how we can bring the network to life so that members have more contact with each other, continue to be central to our thinking and reflections.

There were many grey-haired folk, admittedly, but some young people had come along as well, especially from southeast Europe: Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia – a group of 17 people amongst a total of 90 registered participants.

On Friday afternoon there was a moving farewell to Marie-Noëlle as General Secretary with speeches, music and flowers.

"A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of suffering."

Viola Raheb presented the Kairos Palestine Document which has proven to be a challenge to all Christians who are working for reconciliation: what are concrete steps we can undertake as individual and as a community?

The Kairos Document issued by Christians in Palestine in 2009 begins with these words: "We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God's divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. ... We proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love."



Viola Raheb

The Kairos Palestine Document was brought to life during our conference by talks given by Viola Raheb, a Palestinian theologian who lives in Vienna.

The Kairos Palestine Document is a document of faith and a working paper written from the point of view of those who are afflicted. It arose out of a particular context in a time of hopelessness. The document is addressed in the first place to Christian and then to Muslim Palestinians and aims to provide them with identity, hope and ideas for action. It is consciously and deliberately expressed in a way that is different from that of communications from church hierarchies in the past.

The occupation is determining the life of the people

The situation in the country is described clearly and courageously but without exaggeration. Starting with Jeremiah 6:14 "They say 'Peace, peace' when there is no peace", the authors say: "The reality is one of Israeli occupation", which brings the loss of our freedom, the separation Wall, inhuman conditions in the Gaza Strip, on-going expropriation of land for Israeli settlements, daily humiliation at military checkpoints, families being divided, serious restrictions of religious freedom, refugees, thousands of prisoners, and Palestinians being pushed out of Israel and Jerusalem. What makes it all so depressing is that the situation is becoming more and more unbearable every day.

"Part of this reality is the Israeli disregard of international law and international resolutions, as well as the paralysis of the Arab world and the international community in the face of this contempt. Human rights are violated." The peace negotiations (Oslo) have failed.



"We refuse to be enemies"
Tent of Nations Project - building bridges
between nations

This situation, "the absence of any vision or spark of hope for peace and freedom pushes young people, both Muslim and Christian, to emigrate. Thus the land is deprived of its most important and richest resource."

Living the answer: Faith, love and hope

Out of this situation the authors explain the three key Christian concepts, "faith, hope, and love". In spite of everything, it is the hope which is borne by faith in a just and benevolent God which works for peace and justice. This hope loves the enemy and sees the face of God in EVERY

human being. Injustice must be exposed and justice established. The Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination must be brought to an end. For this to happen there must be protest and creative nonviolent resistance which resists evil with love. The aim is liberation of both the perpetrator and the victim and liberation of both peoples.

The Kairos Palestine Document is therefore being studied in many groups and schools of all religions with the goal of building a broad nonviolent protest movement in Palestine and promoting nonviolent resistance as an alternative to resignation, emigration and violence. The authors call on their own people to deliberately refrain from buying Israeli products.

We are asked to face up to the truth and to join our brothers and sisters in Palestine on a stretch of the path of nonviolent resistance. We are asked to participate in boycotts and disinvestment from (Western) companies and banks which profit from the occupation and the construction of settlements which are illegal under international law. We are asked to contribute by means of economic sanctions to bringing to an end the double standards which allow Israel to ignore international resolutions.

During the discussion that followed Viola Raheb's talks, the following points were raised:

The call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions is rejected by many groups, especially in Germany. But Viola rightly asked us what nonviolent alternatives we can suggest which will have an impact at the highest levels.

She also pointed out that everyone wants to sing about peace, but no-one is prepared to pay the price for it.

People on both sides are traumatised by the occupation as a result of direct



Jakob Fehr, Viola Raheb and her husband
Marwan Abado whose music
was a real gift to us

physical violence: the young Israeli soldiers who are ordered to harass Palestinians and to commit human rights abuses or demolish houses, and the Palestinians who live in constant fear; the Israelis who are frightened of – or are the victims of – bomb or rocket attacks, and the Palestinians who are refused access to the most basic necessities.

The price which is being paid by people on both sides is too high. That's why there are people and groups on both sides who are working for peace and justice and who want to see an end to the violence. Viola said that it is not enough for Israelis and Palestinians to meet together in a pleasant atmosphere. It is important for peace groups to demand an end to the occupation and respect for human rights, and to work on the transformation of their own society. The aim is for all the people throughout the Middle East to be able to live together in peace with justice. In talking about aims, Viola said that until we grasp that the survival of one side enables the survival of the other, there will be no peace. We don't all have to like one another. But we must not kill one another when we are unable to like one another.

Viola asked us as peace churches together with groups on all sides to promote nonviolent resistance, to give both theological and practical support to it, and to develop new forms of resistance. She hopes there will be people who commit themselves wholeheartedly with all their tenderness and vulnerability to working nonviolently and creatively for peace and justice in Israel and Palestine.

Report by Ellen Leutbecher, Mennonite Peace Committee–Germany (DMFK), on the joint conference of DMFK, FOR Germany, Quaker German Yearly Meeting and Church and Peace, November 2012.

Kairos Palestine Document:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/kairos-palestine-document>

For more informations:

**Sabeel - Ecumenical Liberation
Theology Center, Jerusalem**
www.sabeel.org

**South African Theologian responding to the Kairos
Palestine Document**

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/south-african-response-to-kairos-palestine-document>

Day seminars

from the Anabaptist Network and Mennonite Trust:

26 Oct 2013:

Disordering Gender Relationships: Women and Men after Christendom

Birmingham, International Mission Center Selly Oaks,
10-16:30

30 Nov 2013:

The Essentials of Radical Faith

Stuart Murrey, Exeter, The Exwick Parish Hall, 10-16:00

Fellowship of Reconciliation England

2 Dec 2013:

Concert at Christ Church Oxford - starting to commemorate of WW1

For details: www.for.org.uk

***"So people of faith are not lobbyists but wind changers ...
And all the change to world history comes through our personal commitments...
Believe that your commitments can change the world."***

(Jim Wallis, quoted from "The Anglican Peacemaker, Sep 2013)

Protect people! But how?

Challenges to discipleship

“We continue to struggle with how innocent people can be protected from injustice, war and violence. In this light, we struggle with the concept of the “responsibility to protect” and its possible misuse. We urgently request that the WCC and related bodies further clarify their positions regarding this policy.” This is part of the message of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) held in Jamaica in 2012. The debate around these issues amongst church representatives, politicians, civil society, and academics, together with the preparation of delegates to the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), to be held in Busan, South Korea, in November, was the subject of the congress “People protected – just peace lost?” in Berlin in June.

The congress was organised by the Protestant Academies of Berlin and Villigst, the Study Centre of the Protestant Research Association, and the Conference on Peacemaking of the Protestant Churches in Germany (EKD). This conference was part of the two-year consultation on the aims and strategy of German foreign and security policy “to serve the cause of world peace”, in which the Protestant Academies of Villigst (Schwerte), the Rhineland (Bonn), Berlin, Loccum, and Thuringia (Neudietendorf) are participating.

The concept of “responsibility to protect – R2P” has posed new challenges to churches and believers. How can churches promote this concept and its further development? What role do churches and civil society have, especially in relation to prevention? And what structures are required? These questions were raised by the Bishop Martin Schindehütte, Director of the Department for Ecumenical relations and Ministries Abroad of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and Renke Brahms, EKD spokesperson on peace issues.

“History, especially in the witness of the historic peace churches, reminds us of the fact that violence is contrary to the will of God and can never resolve conflicts. It is for this reason that we are moving beyond the doctrine of just war towards a commitment to Just Peace.” However, the concept of just peace raises further questions for us regarding the responsibility to protect in cases of (potential) genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. The responsibility to protect is actually a small part of the steps agreed by the UN in 2005 and is integrated within prevention, response, and post-conflict peace building.



In the introductory speeches and during workshops the various requirements of the “responsibility to protect” concept were worked out, especially from an ethical perspective.

The UN is the institution of the global community with the task of facilita-

ting the non-military resolution of conflicts. When the UN was founded following the experience of the two world wars, the resolution of conflict focussed on state actors in what were mostly conflicts between states. The former UN Special Representative for the Responsibility to Protect – R2P, Dr. Edward C. Luck of the University of San Diego, said that, even with the development of the Responsibility to Protect as an instrument of policy, there was little awareness within the UN that there had been a fundamental change in the character of warfare. **Instead of interstate conflicts there now tend to be internal crises and conflicts, in which non-state armed groups commit crimes and must be held responsible for them.** Such scenarios have not been foreseen in the regulation of the international community until now. New measures must take account of this and apply the principle of responsibility to protect accordingly. Civil society is not just a victim in these circumstances but has an active role to play, both during a crisis and in the preceding stages (prevention) and afterwards (peace building). “So we realise that very often people are left to self protection. Sometimes the most effective responses have been when populations, families, villages, individuals, decide to take some kind of action to make themselves less vulnerable. We also recognise that governments are not black boxes – they are made of individuals who make choices. IR2P (individual Responsibility to Protect) seeks to influence those choices.” (Edward Luck, conference documentation)

When Christians try to find their own responses to this UN concept, they contribute to political discourse speaking from their theological basis. Fernando Enns and Jakob Fehr, both of whom are Mennonite theologians, argue from a similar theological basis: Love of God is also the basis of love of one’s neighbour. **A person’s life belongs to God. It is not at our disposal. This is the basis for loving our neighbours and loving our enemies.** So long as prioritising civilian action includes the possibility of military action as a last resort, it will be necessary to find robust criteria for military intervention. However, there is no ethical dilemma for the peace churches and many in other traditions, because their understanding of the Gospel leads them to rule out the use of violence as an option. “People who take seriously what Jesus said about loving your enemy as a principle both of ethical and political behaviour reject the course of using force, even if their own life is at risk.. (...) **Refraining from violence is bound up with active commitment to alternative strategies for conflict resolution.**” (J. Fehr, conference documentation)

Both theologians described their reflections on what action can be taken in the extreme situations which are addressed by the UN concept. Enns proposed a concept of “just policing” which would allow for the possibility of “police using force”. Most people are in favour of police who may use force or even violence in clearly defined circumstances to protect the life, health, and property of citizens. Jakob Fehr bases his rejection of this on theses put forward by Ullrich Hahn, president of the German Fellowship of Reconciliation. Such police forces cannot be compared with our community police whom we may even know by name as we encounter them on their beat. They are well armoured and highly specialised units and therefore very similar to military troops.

Jacob Fehr bases his hope on groups and people who, in small teams, have already been active in crisis regions for decades: Christian Peacemaker Teams, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme (EAPPI) of the World Council of Churches, Peace Brigades International, Nonviolent Peaceforce, intervention under the auspices of the Civilian

Peace Service, the “quiet diplomacy” of the Quakers... There is already a long history of nonviolent intervention. It should be evaluated, organised and strengthened.

The churches are in a position to contribute to this praxis of nonviolent intervention, because they have a local presence in crisis regions even before the first UN soldier is sent there. Churches could do more to prepare themselves for making a positive contribution to conflict management and crisis intervention. And they could take on this role more strongly by giving support to their sisters and brothers in the ecumenical world. Believers in the countries of the global North must take on an active role in not only abhorring arms production, but also in campaigning for effective measures which outlaw arms production altogether – even when it hurts. Above all, there can no longer be any justification of military intervention.

Here is another quote from the final document of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston: “We as churches are in a position to teach nonviolence to the powerful, if only we dare. For we are followers of one who came as a helpless infant, died on the Cross, told us to lay aside our swords, taught us to love our enemies and was resurrected from the dead.”

We are faced with the challenge of following the path of discipleship.

Davorka Lovreković

For the text of the final document from Kingston go to:

<http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/presentations-speeches-messages/iepc-message.html>

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Vigil and protest against the world’s largest defence and security trade fair: EUROSATORY Paris, June 16 – 20, 2014

Every two years, global market players in the defense and security industry meet in Paris for a trade fair. The organisers pride themselves not only for being the largest fair in their sector but also for attracting the most visitors: military personnel, government officials, and top managers in the industry. The exhibitors display military and security products covering the entire supply chain from raw materials to finished products, including research and development projects. Next year the organisers are emphasising the security sector with new technology clusters on “Civil Security and Emergency Response”, “Critical Infrastructure and Sensitive Facilities Protection” and “Measurements, Tests and Testing Centres”. They hope to attract many new visitors, especially from the private sector.

In the past French Quakers, supported internationally, have organised vigils at the entrance and inviting conversion. Next year there are plans for vigils and other forms of protests.

If you are interested in helping with the preparations and/or participating, you may contact Edward Haasl, Peace Secretary of the Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, at haasl@telenet.be.

Now is the time to speak and act

No military intervention in Syria Develop civilian alternatives to military intervention

We, members of the Church and Peace network, know many people in or from Syria, believers of different religious communities, who are actively engaged in civil society and are seeking dialogue. Together with them, when change seemed possible after many years of dictatorship, we hoped and prayed for reconciliation as the violence increased.

As Christians, we totally reject war and military intervention. Counter-violence simply adds to the violence and breeds violence in both the short and the long term, especially in conflicts in which many different parties are involved. We regard the launching of military action as a punitive measure as a total failure of political action. Any action taken without a UN mandate undermines the political authority of the global organisation.

We commit ourselves to developing every possible means of civilian conflict resolution, so that more civilian instruments are available in future, so as to prevent the escalation of violence at an early stage.

We want to work together with all those who, even after years of escalating conflict, believe that it is both possible and desirable for all the different people in Syria to live together, and who are working for this using nonviolent means.

We have identified the following ways in which individuals can take action (see the links at the end of this article):

- Pray for peace in the region. We invite you to join in the initiative of Pope Francis and to pray in appropriate places on Saturday 7 September between 7.00 p.m. and midnight, to fast and to find out where our common will is leading us.
- In many of our communities there are people who have fled this civil war or who have been with us a long time because they could not live under dictatorship. They are now especially anxious about their family and friends who are still living in Syria. They need people to whom they can talk about their fears and their anger. We can listen with empathy and stand alongside them as good neighbours.
- Our friend Martin Arnold has written an open letter to politicians and appealed for signatories to a petition which calls for a nonviolent solution to be sought through the UN. Anyone who adds their signature automatically sends this open letter to politicians at the same time (see below).
- We can address government ministers, members of parliament and church leaders and encourage them to stand fast in opposing military intervention and supporting the development of civilian alternatives. We can also write letters of support to those who issue declarations against military intervention, because they need feedback and support, so that they know that their stance is supported by a great many people.

We are encouraged by the response of the Grand Mufti of Damascus to Pope Francis' call to prayer and fasting. Political action must grow out of our shared faith in the God of Abraham, so that the weapons are silenced and it becomes possible for people in the region to live together once more.

Now is the time to speak out, to discover forms of resistance to military intervention in Syria, and to continue to pray for peace throughout the Middle East.

Davorka Lovreković

General Secretary of Church and Peace

(for a list of links concerning Syria please go to: www.church-and-peace.org)

Church and Peace-Declaration on Busan:
God of life, make us instruments of your peace and justice
www.church-and-peace.org or upon request from International Office.

Save the date:
Church and Peace Annual General Meeting 2014
May 23-25, 2014
Baarlo, Niederlande
Kasteel de Berckt,
NL-5991 PD Baarlo (Train station: Venlo)
(www.denieuweklasse.nl/kasteel-de-berckt)

Impressum

Church and Peace

European, ecumenical network of peace churches and peace church-oriented congregations, communities and service agencies.



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- US DOLLAR CHECK: To the order of Ivester Church of the Brethren (designation: Church and Peace fund), 25056 'E' Avenue, Grundy Center, Iowa 50638-8761, USA (tax deductible)
- Send STERLING CHEQUES made out to 'Church and Peace' to Gerald Drewett, 20 The Drive, Hertford SG14 3DF